UNITED NATIONS

DP

Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

DP/CP/GAB/5
11 March 1993
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Fortieth session
1-18 June 1993, New York
Item 4(a) of the provisional agenda

PROGRAMME PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Country, intercountry and global programmes

FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR GABON

Programme period	Resources	$
January 1993-December 1996	Net IPF	1 562 000
	Estimated cost-sharing	3 200 000
	Total	4 762 000

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	DEVELOPMENT SITUATION, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES	1 - 7	2
	A. Current socio-economic situation	1 - 4	2
	B. National development strategies and objectives	5 - 7	2
II.	EXTERNAL COOPERATION	8 - 10	3
	A. Role of external cooperation	8	3
	B. Aid coordination arrangements	9 - 10	3
III.	THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME	11 - 42	3
	A. Assessment of ongoing country programme	11 - 18	3
	B. Proposals for UNDP cooperation	19 - 38	5
	C. Cooperation outside selected areas of concentration	39	8
	D. Implementation and management arrangements	40 - 42	9

Annexes

I.	Financial summary	10
II.	Programme matrix	12

I. DEVELOPMENT SITUATION, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

A. Current socio-economic situation

1. Gabon is classified as a middle-income country, with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of $2960 (1990) and an estimated population of 1.2 million. The country owes its economic growth to its abundant natural resources, and petroleum has played a major part in the rapid rise in its GNP since the 1970s.

2. The sizeable volume of public expenditure to which this increase in revenue has given rise, public investment directed largely toward physical infrastructures (to the detriment, relatively speaking, of productive activities in agriculture and industry) and increasing Government control of the economy, with the development of a network of public enterprises characterized by mediocre performances, have each in turn resulted in disruptions of the market economy. This has led to an accelerated rise in foreign indebtedness (57% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1990) and structural imbalances associated with dependency on raw materials exports and the absence of a durable production base outside the petroleum and mining sectors.

3. The cumulative effect of these disruptions and imbalances was an economic and financial crisis without precedent in the country that led the public authorities to embark on a stabilization programme in 1986, and a structural adjustment programme in 1988. The situation was further aggravated by an unfavourable international environment and the overall decline in raw materials prices on world markets.

4. The social cost of the reforms was a worsening of the situation of the vulnerable segments of the population, already at a disadvantage as a result of the uneven distribution of national revenue. The human development index (HDI) elaborated by UNDP in 1992 ranked Gabon 91st out of 160 countries; this compares unfavourably with its position on the GNP scale. The disparity between national-income and human-development levels can be seen especially in the level of life expectancy at birth (52.5 years), infant and 5-year mortality rates (99 and 164 per 1000 live births, respectively), maternal mortality, and the low efficiency of the educational system.

B. National development strategies and objectives

5. The need for greater attention to the needs of the population, as expressed in the political and social changes that resulted, in 1990, in the democratization of the country's political institutions, led the authorities to focus their immediate efforts on three areas (employment, education and improved living environment), while at the same time reaffirming the major objective of long-term diversification of the economy.

6. The Government also undertook new commitments for the rational use of natural resources, in line with its policy of improving the living environment of the population.

7. This shift in focus of the immediate objectives of reform opens the way to development that is more balanced socially, with greater room for involvement of the population and private initiative.

II. EXTERNAL COOPERATION

A. Role of external cooperation

8. During the period 1989-1991, the Government of Gabon received a total of $289 million in official development assistance, or an average of $96 million annually, which amounted to 2% of the GDP or $80.30 per inhabitant. Ninety-five percent of this external aid was derived from bilateral sources, with France playing a leading role, while the sources of multilateral assistance (3.7%) were the European Economic Community (EEC) (52%), the United Nations system (48%) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (1.5%).

B. Aid coordination arrangements

9. The Ministry of Planning, the Economy and Land-Use Management, which is responsible for the design and application of Government policy in the area of planning and for the study, assessment and launching of development projects, serves as coordinator of external aid together with the technical ministries in charge of the different sectors. With regard to multilateral assistance, in particular that of the United Nations Development Programme, the Ministry has a direct hand in the programming, monitoring and assessment of the related cooperation activities.

10. Coordination within the United Nations system takes place through the synchronization of programming cycles, as is done between UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and within the framework of meetings held among the members of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) that are active in the country: UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

III. THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

A. Assessment of ongoing country programme

11. The fourth country programme for Gabon (1988-1990) was in keeping with the general guidelines of the preceding programmes, namely rural development, agricultural production, economic planning and the development of natural resources. Starting in 1988, the Government embarked at the same time on a structural adjustment programme, carried out in an atmosphere of recession subsequently aggravated by the social upheavals that led up to the establishment, in 1990, of new democratic institutions in the country.

12. The profound changes that took place on the national level during this period of crisis and transition, their impact on the execution of the fourth programme and the results of the mid-term review of May 1989 and the annual review of November 1990 made it necessary to downgrade some programme objectives or stretch them out over a longer period than originally anticipated. In recognition of this situation, the parties agreed to extend the fourth programme to December 1992.

13. Any appraisal of the fourth programme, therefore, must necessarily take account of this context and the changes that occurred in the country's situation and the Government's development policies. This context and the consequent constraints affecting project execution also explain the uneven results obtained by UNDP cooperation within the framework of this programme.

14. While appreciable concrete results were achieved in the introduction of new agricultural methods, efforts directed toward the goal of planning and management of the economy were thwarted by the priority accorded to coping with the crisis and cleaning up public finance, to the detriment of planning proper. The experience acquired also pointed up the need for greater harmony, in future, between the short-term imperatives of public management and longer-range strategic planning.

15. Advances were made in the area of training in the agricultural sector, as a new generation of versatile agricultural technicians were made available to the country in the recently reorganized National School for Rural Development.

16. The results achieved in the natural-resources sector contributed toward national capacity-building or strengthening, especially in the highly important field of mining-resource prospecting and appraisal, including computerized management and the organization of a central mineralogical data bank.

17. In the area of programme design, we should note that the programme approach revealed its limits, in the sense that it did not adequately take into account the often broader implications of the development problems tackled. The overall impact of the programme was limited by inadequate internalization of projects within the ministries in charge, the mobility of national management-level personnel, delays in mobilizing the contributions of the United Nations executing agencies and difficulties in setting up national operating budgets.

18. Lastly, not enough attention was devoted to socio-cultural realities and the development of the role of women and their contribution to development, especially in the areas of rural development and human resources.

B. Proposals for UNDP cooperation

1. Preparatory process

19. The profound changes that have occurred in the country's economic situation and political institutions over the past few years have given rise to some new thoughts concerning the future orientation of UNDP cooperation, as is already evident in the annual review of the programme (November 1990). This thinking was further inspired by the recommendations of the General Assembly at the end of its triennial review of the operational activities of the United Nations system in the field of development (resolution 44/211 of 22 December 1989) and those of the UNDP Governing Council on priority areas for the fifth programme (decision 90/34 of 23 June 1990).

20. Following a productive dialogue with the Government, this shift in emphasis was examined in greater depth and elaborated in the UNDP advisory note of 1991, the purport of which received general acceptance at the national level. The present document is in line with the proposals contained in that note, subsequently enriched by the work of the initial phase of the NATCAP (National Technical Cooperation Assessment and Programmes) exercise.

2. Strategy for UNDP cooperation

21. The Government of Gabon wishes to profit from the comparative advantages of UNDP cooperation - its neutrality, universality and flexibility - in order to steer the country's development toward the areas defined below, with particular emphasis on the human side of development and medium- and long-term strategies.

22. The Government of Gabon feels that UNDP resources and those made available to it through its participation in programme costs must be focussed on three long-term objectives: human development, improved management of development, and the environment. The first objective is based on a policy of improving the welfare of the population. The second reflects the importance accorded to future economic and social prospects and also shows that ensuring better national control of strategic development-management functions is a priority concern. The third objective is indicative of the will to preserve and improve environment capital viewed as a source of economic and social development. Efforts will be continued to promote regional integration, technical cooperation among developing countries and coordination of external aid with a view to greater complementarity. In the area of human resources development, finally, special attention will be paid to the promotion of the role of women.

3. A look at the areas of concentration of UNDP cooperation

Human development

23. Development problems and objectives. Cut-backs in public spending as a result of the financial rehabilitation measures adopted during the past few years and the situation of economic crisis currently prevailing in the country have added to the difficulty experienced by the most vulnerable segments of

the population in satisfying their essential needs in the areas of health, education, job availability and housing, while at the same time social demands are on the rise owing to the process of democratization of public life. This deterioration has impeded the realization of the goal of equity reaffirmed by the authorities and has led them, since 1991, to increase the social-budget share of investment expenditure.

24. Proposed UNDP cooperation. To meet these challenges, it is proposed that UNDP cooperation should be organized along the following main lines: an expanded programme of action on the social dimension of adjustment (DSA) and a specific, autonomous component relating to employment.

25. In an initial phase, the DSA programme will involve analysing social deficits, studying macro-economic and sectoral policies and their impact on income generation and distribution, and identifying the areas where statistical data-collection and analysis systems and the management structures of the sectors concerned need to be reinforced. The next step will be to elaborate an SDA intervention strategy for both the short and the long term, aimed primarily at greater protection of the low-income segments of the population and grass-roots participation in development and growth. UNDP cooperation will thus help to strengthen the capacity of the administration to correct or mitigate the negative impact of the adjustment process on vulnerable social groups, especially women, and to ensure better integration of the social dimension into political models for the country's development. A national employment programme, geared to the development of initiative and human resources in the private sector, will be formulated.

26. The objective of improving the welfare of the population will also be pursued within the framework of the rural development project currently being carried out in the province of N'Gounié. The project targets 1,800 farmers involved in a self-development programme designed to enhance food production and increase income derived from working the land.

27. Complementary assistance. In the UNFPA programme for 1992-1996, defined jointly with the Government, the following priority areas were adopted: formulation and management of population policies and programmes, inclusion of demographic variables in development plans, reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity, and education on family life and questions of population both within educational institutions and without.

28. These actions and those of the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the African Development Bank (ADB), the Governments of Belgium and France and EEC in the areas of health and education, as well as the support of EEC and the Government of Belgium for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and industries, will constitute invaluable adjuncts to UNDP cooperation for which optimum coordination will be sought with the support of the Government.

Improved development management

29. Development problems and objectives. In adapting its public management methods to suit the rapid and considerable transformations undergone by both

society and the economy, the Government of Gabon has experienced delays and inadequacies that hamper its ability to respond in the best possible way to the new development challenges and issues that face it. These adaptation deficiencies are especially noticeable in the institutional sphere and in the area of human resources development, making the country inordinately dependent on outside expertise.

30. Beyond the imperatives of capacity-strengthening in the area of economic management, there is the question of the long-range goals of national development and the deep-lying transformations that those goals imply. Long-term thinking seems especially important due to the fact that, in addition to the difficulties connected with the current economic situation, the country faces problems of a structural nature the evolution of which will determine the future of the society and its development. In view of these challenges, the Government decided in 1992 to engage in some prospective thinking in order to identify major development trends and bend them toward a plausible, desirable image of society and development a generation down the road.

31. Proposed UNDP cooperation. In view of these facts, UNDP cooperation is sought in two main areas, the overall objective being to promote development on a sound, sustainable basis.

32. The programme to strengthen the management capacity of the Gabonese administration in the priority sectors of education, health and training will start with a diagnostic analysis of the structures of those sectors and the national work force and skills available. It will then turn to the task of formulating a strategy and programmes to develop human resources on the basis of an integrated approach that goes beyond the internal needs of each of the ministries concerned and seeks to ensure, at each stage, the active interfaces among the three key sectors of education, health and employment.

33. The objective of the proposed long-term strategy is to promote a balanced, sustainable development model designed for the full development of the human being and optimal utilization of the country's resources. Prospective studies will primarily involve a structural analysis of Gabonese society and its environment, the plotting of a trend pattern focused on the year 2025 and the formulation of a medium-term strategy indicating the trajectory to be followed with a view to achieving long-term objectives. These studies are of vital importance, considering the structural and socio-economic transformations required by the country's present transition phase.

34. The two programmes mentioned above (strengthening of management capacity and development of human resources; and prospective studies for a long-term development strategy) were designed essentially as national initiatives, but their international character should be maintained for the purposes of execution.

35. Complementary assistance. As mentioned above, the programme for strengthening management capacity will rely on the NATCAP exercise and will be implemented jointly with the programme relating to the social dimension.

Close complementarity will be sought with the programmes supported by the World Bank pertaining structural adjustment and management of the economy, by EEC and bilateral donors in the area of planning and sectoral reform, and by the Government of France in the field of long-term strategic planning.

Environment

36. Development problems and objectives. Gabon is privileged in that it has a vast forested area that is relatively intact, a flora considered to be the richest anywhere in the African tropical forest and an extremely varied fauna. The ecological diversity and authenticity of some sites that have been disturbed little if at all account for the role that the country is called upon to play in the African context as repository of animal and vegetable species, some of which have yet to be discovered. Though Gabon may be a veritable sanctuary for both fauna and flora, still, like any rich and complex environment, it is highly sensitive and consequently quite fragile.

37. Proposed UNDP cooperation. Based on an examination of existing ecosystems and the risks of disruption of their equilibria due to human action and development needs, a National Environmental Action Plan (PNAE) will be prepared, defining priorities, strategies and plans of action for the coming years. The PNAE will serve as a national frame of reference for all questions relating to or associated with the environment as well as for donor action in this area. It will also complement the national Agenda 21, which the Government is preparing in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

38. Complementary assistance. UNDP cooperation in the preparation of PNAE developed out of the discussions held in 1991 and 1992 with the Government and the other donors (World Bank, EEC, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Governments of France and Germany). The Forests and Environment Project grew out of these same discussions and has been approved for a period of five years with financing by the Government, the World Bank and the other financial sponsors mentioned above. An additional budget allocation, to be financed under the Capacity 21 programme set up in the wake of UNCED, will be requested from UNDP for the purpose of building management capacity within the ministry in charge of environment.

C. Cooperation outside selected areas of concentration

39. Funds amounting to 3% of the resources of the fifth programme are to be allocated for the purpose of completing, in April and September 1993, respectively, the project for strengthening the Direction de la géologie et de la recherche minière and the project for strengthening the Direction nationale de la météorologie.

D. Implementation and management arrangements

1. Programme approach

40. Owing to the multidisciplinary nature of its field of action, its themes and its objectives, UNDP cooperation in the areas of concentration mentioned above implies a broadened, sufficiently flexible, coordinated programme approach that includes the different components and actors.

2. Executing agency

41. Apart from the necessary internationalization of the cooperation process at every level and the priority to be accorded to the use of national resources, including expertise, for implementation purposes, the Government and UNDP agree to consider national execution of programmes and projects as the preferred mode of operation whenever possible, with the support and expertise of the services and agencies of the United Nations system, and, with this in view, to help the responsible national structures to strengthen their own technical and management capacities.

42. In their design and formation, the projects will include the most precise performance and success indicators possible, so as to facilitate the determination and evaluation of measurable results. Such indicators and the expected results, moreover, must take into special account the role of women and their contribution to development.

Annex I

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

I. ESTIMATED RESOURCES (IPF + cost-sharing) TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR PROGRAMMING

	(Thousands of dollars)	
Carry-over from fourth cycle IPF	(307)	
Fifth cycle IPF	2 269	
Estimated 199. xpenditures	(400)	
Subtotal IPF (1993-1996)		1 562 a/
Cost-sharing (programme)	3 200	
Cost-sharing (project)		
Subtotal cost-sharing		3 200
TOTAL		4 762

II. ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES (IPF + cost-sharing) BY AREA OF CONCENTRATION

Area of concentration	Thousands of dollars IPF	Cost-sharing	Total	Percentage of total resources
Human development	2 730	-	2 730	57
Development management	971	-	971	20
Environment	334	-	334	7
Outside selected areas of concentration	160	-	160	3
Subtotal	4 195	-	4 195	87
Unprogrammed reserve	567	-	567	13
TOTAL	4 762	-	4 762	100

a/ The unprogrammed reserve is calculated from the available IPF for 1993-1996 ($1562).

/...

III. COMPLEMENTARY ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER SOURCES USED IN AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

(Thousands of dollars)

A. UNDP-administered funds		
SPR	30	
TSS-1	260	
PDF II	150	
MDP	900	
UNIFEM	350	
Subtotal		1 690
B. Other United Nations resources		
JCGP participating agencies		
UNFPA	2 000	
UNICEF	2 500	
IFAD	9 000	
Other United Nations agencies (non-UNDP financed)		
FAO (TCP and FIT)	3 000	
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	2 500	
World Bank	22 500	
Subtotal		41 500
Total non-core and other United Nations resources		165 000
TOTAL		208 190

Annex II

PROGRAMME MATRIX

	Area of concentration	Area of focus a/					
		Poverty eradication and grass-roots participation	Environment and natural resource management	Management development	TCDC	Transfer and adaptation of technology	WID
I.	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT						
	Employment	*					*
	Social dimension	*			*		*
	Rural development	*	*		*		*
II.	DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT						
	Management capacity	*		*			
	Prospective studies			*	*		*
III.	ENVIRONMENT	*	*	*	*		*

a/ Asterisks indicate major linkage only.